

House Select Committee on Community Relations, Law Enforcement and Justice Public Comments Report - LINC

Date Submitted	Category	Name	Comments
11/24/2020 09:19 AM	Community Relations	Rep. Elmer Floyd	Allow a study bill for local municipalities to set up review boards with subpoena power.
11/24/2020 10:47 AM	Justice	Mr. Adam Sotak	<p>November 24, 2020</p> <p>House Select Committee on Community Relations, Law Enforcement, and Justice North Carolina General Assembly 16 W. Jones Street Room #2225 Raleigh, NC 27601-1096</p> <p>Honorable Committee Members:</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments to the Committee. On behalf of NC Child, I would like to express our appreciation of the work of the House Select Committee on Community Relations, Law Enforcement, and Justice.</p> <p>NC Child is a non-profit organization whose mission is to advocate for public policies that ensure that every child in our state can thrive – whatever their race, ethnicity, or place of birth. We are pleased to see that the committee has worked hard to put forward recommendations for discussion, and we look forward to the final report. However, we are dismayed at the lack of focus on solutions that prevent children and youth from becoming involved in the justice system.</p> <p>We respectfully submit these comments in order to encourage the NC House of Representatives to reauthorize this committee's work for 2021, and to recommend an increased emphasis on preventive solutions for children and youth.</p> <p>As the leading multi-issue child advocacy organization in North Carolina, NC Child strongly supports reforms for juveniles in the larger criminal justice system. We have long championed juvenile justice reforms including “Raise the Age” legislation. We urge the committee to place increased emphasis on ways to improve our juvenile justice system, reducing racial bias and diverting youth out of the system altogether by providing strong, culturally appropriate rehabilitative programs. By doing so, we can prevent future youth involvement with the justice system and increase both monetary savings and community trust.</p> <p>Promote School Justice Partnership Agreements as Directed by Raise the Age</p> <p>One key strategy we would like to highlight is the need for School Justice Partnership agreements in all local school districts. Raise the Age legislation, passed in 2017, encourages these partnerships. We strongly recommend increasing needed resources to nurture their development and implementation. Currently, fewer than half of North Carolina school districts have these agreements in place. This is progress, but North Carolina can do better. School-Justice Partnerships are especially important because nearly half of all juvenile arrests occur in school, and a disproportionate number of those arrests are of children of color. We need to keep children in school and out of jail, and School Justice Partnerships help do just that.</p> <p>Re-Entry Services for Families of Formerly Incarcerated Parents</p> <p>We also want to lift up recommendations to increase funding for re-entry services for formerly incarcerated parents and their families. Over 25,000 children in North Carolina have incarcerated parents. Such circumstances can lead to toxic levels of stress that can have a devastating impact on a child’s development, learning, and behavior. North Carolina can provide family members of incarcerated individuals with the social and practical support they need to cope during the extremely challenging time of family separation. Services</p>

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			<p>can range from family reunification planning to school-based support groups for kids. NC Child strongly recommends strategic public investments in prevention as a highly effective and cost-efficient way to reduce racial inequities in the justice system. We encourage the NC House of Representatives to reauthorize this committee's work for 2021, and to recommend an increased emphasis on solutions that prevent children from becoming involved in the justice system.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Adam Sotak, MSW Director of Public Engagement NC Child</p>
11/24/2020 06:09 PM	Justice	Ms. Beth Tanner	<p>The North Carolina Innocence Inquiry Commission was not aware of or consulted about the recommended changes to the Commission's governing statute prior to those recommendations being made. After learning about the changes through a colleague, we reviewed them. There are several changes that are similar to changes the Commissioners have considered before and rejected. In addition, there are several changes which would require a fiscal note as we would need additional staff and additional operating funds to implement the changes. We understand these changes are not expected to be taken up as recommendations, which we appreciate. The Commission is a state agency and though there are several other innocence organizations in North Carolina, such as the Duke Wrongful Convictions Clinic (James Coleman/Theresa Newman), the Wake Forest Innocence and Justice Clinic (Mark Rabil), and the Center on Actual Innocence (Christine Mumma), these organizations are not associated with the Commission. Though these non-profits handle post-conviction innocence claims as well, there are some very distinct and important differences between non-profit/law school innocence organizations and our agency, which was created by the NCGA. Thus, it is important we consider any recommendations to change the Commission carefully so as not to disturb our excellent record and the careful balance the NCGA has crafted in creating our mission. We respectfully request that any legislative member who would like to consider any changes to the Commission's governing statute contact the Commission's Executive Director Lindsey Guice Smith at 919-890-1580.</p>